

Drug Interactions with Alcohol

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Many people who know better than to mix different drugs will absentmindedly drink alcohol while taking medication. The effects can be dramatic. Alcohol (beer, wine, liquor, and some liquid medicines) and certain drugs work in the same areas of the brain, so some combinations greatly intensify these effects. Alcohol may inhibit prescribed medications from effectively fighting disease when using recommended dosages. Some combinations produce unpleasant side effects; some are dangerous.

The following table shows possible problems when mixing alcohol with certain types of medicines. Past drinking habits, the amount of alcohol consumed, chronic diseases, and the age and weight of the person can alter these effects. The time element also varies - some drugs remain in the body for as long as several days. If you have any questions about mixing alcohol with your medicines, don't drink, until you've asked your pharmacist if it is safe.

Alcohol + Drugs = Possible Problems



Sedatives:

- ⊕ Valium, Aativan, Xanax, Serax, Buspar, etc.



Decreases alertness and judgement and can lead to household accidents and automobile crashes. This is an especially dangerous combination which may be fatal.

Over-the-Counter Painkillers:

- ⊕ Aspirin, Bufferin, Excedrin, Anacin, Alka-Seltzer, etc.



Increases stomach irritation and the potential for bleeding in the stomach.

- ⊕ Acetaminophen, Tylenol, etc.



Increases the possibility of liver damage.

- ⊕ Non-steroidal drugs, ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, ketoprofen, Orudis, naproxen sodium, Aleve, etc.



Increases stomach irritation, and the potential for bleeding in the stomach, and the potential for liver damage.

Prescription Painkillers:

- ⊕ Non-steroidal drugs: ibuprofen, Motrin, naproxen sodium, Anaprox, naproxen, Naprosyn, Toradol, Voltaren, Orudis, Daypro, etc.



As above, increases the irritation and potential for bleeding in the stomach and the potential for liver damage.

- ⊕ Narcotics: codeine, Demerol, Darvon, Darvocet, Ultram, Percodan, Percocet, Tylox, Lartab, hydrocodone, etc.



Decreases alertness and judgement, and can reduce brain functioning, leading to the loss of effective breathing and causing death.

Timed-release or Enteric-coated Drugs:

- ⊕ Contac, vitamins, iron supplements, enteric coated aspirin, etc.



Alcohol can dissolve these protective coatings allowing and immediate release of the full dose of medicine rather than spreading it across several hours. This can result in damage to the stomach.

Stimulants:

- ⊕ Weight loss products, Dexedrine, caffeine, coffee, Ritalin, Benzedrine, methamphetamine, ephedrine, MaHuang, etc.



Stimulants may give the drinker a false sense of control and alertness. Stimulants do not improve functioning or help you to gain control. You end up awake and drunk, not a sober person.

Sleep Aids:

- ⊕ Over-the-counter: Tylenol PM, Sominex, Nytol, Quiet World, etc.

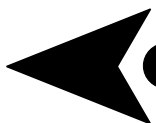


Most of these drugs are antihistamines. Alcohol will increase the sedative effect of these drugs and can lead to increased household accidents and automobile crashes.

- ⊕ Prescriptions: Dalmane, Halcion, Restoril, Seconal, Ambien, etc.



This can be a fatal combination resulting in failure to breathe properly, coma, and death.



Alcohol + Drugs = Possible Problems



Cough, Cold, Allergy, and Motion Sickness Products:

- ⊕ Actifed, Contac, Dristan, NyQuil, Dimetapp, Benadryl, Dramamine, Bonine, etc.



All of these products may contain antihistamines which, as described above, can cause increased sedation and loss of functioning when combined with alcohol.

Antipsychotics:

- ⊕ Stelazine, Mellaril, Thorazine, Prolixin, Clozaril, Haldol, etc.



This combination should be avoided at all times. Mixing these drugs with alcohol may result in severe impairment, difficulty walking, thinking, and driving. This combination may also result in liver damage, coma, or death.

High Blood Pressure Medicines:

- ⊕ Capoten, Procardia, Aldomet, Inderal, Tenormin, Isoptin, Hytrin, Cozaar, Lopressor, etc.



Alcohol in combination with these drugs can lower your blood pressure so much that you are at risk of fainting or falling. It also makes driving difficult.

Diuretics or "Water Pills":

- ⊕ Lasix, Dyazide, Maxide, Bumex, etc.



Alcohol when mixed with diuretics can greatly increase the risk of feeling dizzy or falling down especially when getting up from bed or from a chair.

Anitcoagulants or "Blood Thinners":

- ⊕ Coumadin, Lovenox, Heparin, etc.



Alcohol increases the ability of these drugs to slow clotting. This can lead to life-threatening bleeding. In people who drink all the time, these drugs may not work as well as they should.

Antidepressants:

- ⊕ Prozac, Wellbutrin, Zoloft, Elavil, Tofranil, Sinequan, Luvox, Nardil, Parnate, etc.



Alcohol is a depressant. Combining alcohol with antidepressants will keep the drug from doing its job. Certain types of drugs, when combined with alcohol, can lead to life-threatening high blood pressure.

Anticonvulsants:

- ⊕ Dilantin, Zarontin, Tegretol, Mysoline, phenobarbital, etc.



The drug's ability to stop seizures and convulsions decreases when taken with alcohol. You are at risk of having a seizure when these drugs are mixed with alcohol. Alcohol also increases the chance that these drugs will cause blood disorders.

Antidiabetic Drugs:

- ⊕ insulin, Diabinese, Glucotrol, Micronase, Orinase, Precose, Glucophage, etc.



Alcohol has severe and unpredictable reactions when mixed with these drugs. Drinking alcohol makes it very difficult to control blood sugar. Patients with diabetes should avoid drinking alcohol.

Anitibiotics:

- ⊕ penicillin, ampicillin, tetracycline, Flagyl, erythromycin, Bactrim, etc.



Interactions between alcohol and antibiotics vary a great deal. Always ask your pharmacist before using alcohol with antibiotics.

Alcohol and Drug Information Clearinghouse

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